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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 003177

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAR (MCISAAC), INL, L/LEI (TAYLOR,
FUENTES, MUELLER)
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FOR CRIM/OIA (ORJALES)
DEPT PASS DEA FOR OF, OFI, DO AND DCO

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TAGS: CJAN PGOV KCRM SNAR DR
SUBJECT: DOMINICANS KEYED UP ABOUT QUIRINO NARCOTRAFFICKING
CASE

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 1971
 1B. SANTO DOMINGO 899

Classified By: Michael Meigs, Economic and Political Counselor, reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) The following report was posted on our SIPRNET
site on June 13.

QUIRINO - THE CASE THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

(SBU) The two Assistant U.S. Attorneys prosecuting the Quirino Paulino Castillo (Quirino) narcotics trafficking case in the Southern District of New York spent two and a half days in the Dominican Republic last week, June 8-10. They learned about the size and scope of the case and what it means to the Dominican people. In that short period, Dominican Attorney General Dominguez Brito met with them three times to stress the importance of the case and emphasize his desire to collaborate closely in identifying others involved in Quirino's drug transportation network.

Cautious approach

(SBU) The AUSAs approached the trip cautiously, looking for information and details on evidentiary matters. Their consistent message was that the Quirino case is in its preliminary stages and that they will follow all leads. One status conference has been held, the next is scheduled for September, but the trial is not even on the docket yet. They expect that plea negotiations will start as more co-defendants are arrested and extradited to the Southern District of New York. (To date, seven co-defendants are in custody in New York; two more arrested last week in the Dominican Republic waived their rights to extradition hearings and arrived in New York last week.)

Dominican government wants action now

(C) The Dominican Attorney General, the capital region District Attorney and their staffs were pleased by the USG visit and spent hours with the AUSAs discussing evidentiary matters and leads to other possible co-collaborators. The Dominicans remain anxious for progress in the case in the United States via a quick trial date or plea. They asked that we request in extradition all those who may have ties to the Quirino organization. The Dominican authorities are well aware that the Quirino ties might lead all the way to former President Hipolito Mejia. The political reality is that If they advocate early and often for U.S. indictments of all related co-conspirators and extradition requests, the Fernandez government will better positioned to pursue Mejia, if he can be tied to this mess.

No information for indictment of former President Mejia

(C) We understand that at this stage in the case, there is not enough information to justify a U.S. indictment of Mejia. Instead, what exists are rumor and speculation) Dominican staples. Many of the rumors here arose from the recent suit against Vincho Castillo, a criminal and civil action for defamation instituted by sitting senator Hernani Salazar, from Mejia's PRD. The judge, in what the press is calling a "solomonic" decision, found Vincho not guilty on criminal defamation charges but liable on civil defamation charges. The interesting twist to the trial is that truth is a defense to defamation. So in finding Vincho not guilty but liable, even the judge seems to be indicating that she isn't certain if Vincho was telling the truth in his assertions of ties between Quirino and the Mejia administration. The AUSAs will receive transcripts of the Vincho trial to review in conjunction with the Quirino case.

More fugitives and soon to be more defendants in the U.S.

(SBU) Shortly before the AUSAs arrived in town, the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court authorized the issuance of arrest warrants based on extradition requests delivered by the Embassy. Ten of those warrants are for fugitives wanted under the same indictment at Quirino. Two of them were arrested early last week, waived their extradition rights and were sent to the United States. Two more are in Dominican custody, with an arrangement for local charges to be dropped to clear the way for arrests pursuant to the extradition requests. Of the remaining six, three were apprehended by the Dominican DNCD this weekend. Two of the new arrestees have indicated in early interrogations that they will waive their rights to extradition hearings. Each returned fugitive is one more defendant with good reason to cooperate with US authorities.

(SBU) The consequences of the Quirino case continue to build and its implications are just now becoming evident. As defendants start implicating others in return for plea bargains, we can expect more indictments, more requests for extradition and more rumor and speculation in the Dominican Republic.

¶2. (U) Drafted by Angela Kerwin.

¶3. (U) This piece can be consulted at our SIPRNET site
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
along with extensive other material.
Hertell